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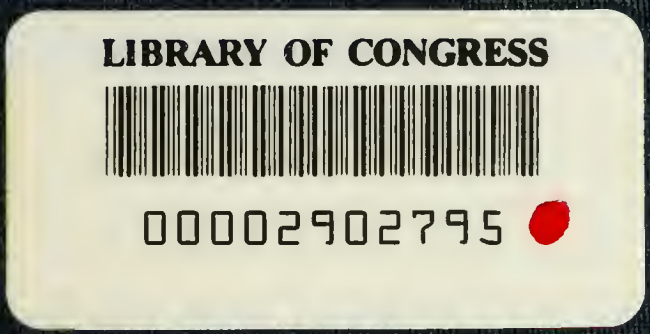

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WINE VS. WOMAN;

7749

OR THE

First Invasion of Woman's Rights:

A TEMPERANCE POEM,

BY REV. WM. H. FONERDEN, M. D.,

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WINE vs. WOMAN.

AMID the splendor, until then unknown,
Emblazoning the Medio-Persian throne,
When Babylon, enriched by Judah's fall,
Had been reduced by Cyrus to his thrall,
Ahasuerus, in his pomp and pride,
The halls of Shusan's palace opened wide,
Where lordly princes, whose immense domains
From India stretched to Ethiopia's plains,
Wild revels plied—no better, if no worse,
Than those that wrought Belshazzar's fatal curse;
And from the orgies of these drunken wights
Dates the Invasion First of WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

Urged e'en to phrensy by the mocking fiend,
That on his foaming wine-cup danced and grinned,
The Persian monarch, now a senseless sot,
His own imperial dignity forgot,
And to his fallen manhood's deep disgrace,
Would fain unveil his queenly consort's face
Before the eyes of that polluted crew,
Who formed his bacchanalian retinue.

His seven days' carousal fired his brains,
And forth he sent his liv'ried chamberlains
To bring fair Vashti, with the royal crown,
Where all her graces might be noted down.

Oh, chilled must be the affections of that heart
Which could perform such base, ignoble part,
As bid the princes glare, in lewd amaze,
On charms too sacred but for love's own gaze!
Dead to the sanctity of nuptial vows
Must be the soul that could a virtuous spouse—
Because, indignant, she those charms refused
To have for sport of drunken lords abused—
Thrust from the rooftree where, in youth, she poured
The priceless love with which her breast was stored!

The purity which woman stamps, on earth,
Akin to beings of angelic birth,
Once soiled by sin, the darkness dread partakes,
That reigns unbroken over Stygian lakes.
Her matchless charms, which once but shone to please,
Now serve affection's thermal fount to freeze:
Her eye, once kindling with a vestal fire,
No longer can a holy thought inspire:
Though once all sunny was her winsome smile,
It now seems but of sorcery the wile:
Her voice, once sweet as seraph's softest tone,
Now grates like deepest bass of harsh trombone:
Her words, which did in blessings once abound,
With caustic taunts and vile reproach resound:
Her sympathies unstrung, and toneless all,
The honey of her love is turned to gall!

With her, oh, who a union would desire,
As intimate as mingling flames of fire?
Or gushing droplets from the fountain clear?
Or gaseous elements of atmosphere?
Just such the union matrimony forms,
If born in calm, or nurtured 'mid wild storms:
If silken bonds, or galling iron chains—
If pleasures bright, or gloomy sorrow's pains—
Be ours, once launched upon this life-broad sea,
We thenceforth drop distinctive entity.

O thou, fair creature! who, by kindly Heaven,
To fill the chalice of man's bliss wast given,

Remember, thou art with thy pow'r endued
To woo from evil, and to win to good.
Though as the moon thine influence be mild,
It plays not on the icebergs, mountain piled,
Of his stern heart with her unmelting rays;
But, centring there in one bright focal blaze,
Like solar beams by lens together brought,
Humanity to any mould is wrought:
If good, in light; if ill, it clothes in gloom;
It shapes man's destiny, and seals his doom.

And thou, who feel'st the truth which all must own—
That "'tis not good for man to be alone"—
Oh, take not her as helpmeet to your arms,
Whose sole attraction is her person's charms;
Whose only beauty is a Helen's face,
And waist made sylph-like by her corset lace;
Within whose Hebe's breast Alecto's heart
Leaps to the music of fell Circe's art,
And through her veins pours Cleopatran blood,
Black as the tide of Acheron's foul flood.
Yet she who, though denied a Venus' face,
A Juno's figure, or Aglaia's grace,
Hath temper sweet and intellectual mind,
A heart of love, a soul to God inclined,
By half will lessen all thine earthly woe,
And round thy joys a double halo throw.

Ah, had Ahasuerus heard the voice
Of wisdom true, commending Vashti's choice,
Rather to brave her angered liege-lord's frown,
Than wear—life-long disgrace!—a sullied crown,
He ne'er had issued the debased command,
That she before a maudlin court should stand,
Cynosure fair of leering debauchees,
Whose blood, now boiling with long revelries,
Would fiercely pulse, and pulse with only lust,
Filling her soul with horror and disgust.
But little now the king of honor recked:
What rights had Vashti that he should respect?

Alas! the sparkling wine-cup's mad'ning mirth,
Gives rein to passions of Tartarean birth,
Which darkly stain the escutcheon of the realm,
In poignant grief the modest queen o'erwhelm,
And, as the crafty Memucan incites,
Work the subversion, too, of WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

A royal council, at the king's behest,
Convened, and instituted legal quest,
To find what punishment they should award,
Such glaring treason to their sovereign lord.
Futile their rack of brain—vain their pretence—
No statute find they cov'ring the offence;
For Vashti had but hedged her spotless name
With the same bulwark which Lucretia's fame,
In after years, protected from the breath
Of foul suspicion—worse, by far, than death!

But, lacking law, at once that bold, bad man,
The premier of the empire, Memucan,
Addressed the king and princes with an art
Which would have honored a more noble part,
Than that essaying, through a hapless queen,
On WOMAN'S RIGHTS to vent its drunken spleen.

"Beyond the king this wrong," he said, "extends:
The princes—aye, all husbands it offends;
For when from Nile to Ind this scene is told,
Our Median dames and Persian matrons, bold
To follow the example Vashti sets,
Will scorn our mandates and despise our threats.
Let therefore now the queen yield her high place
To one more worthy of our sovereign's grace,
And her sad downfall ev'ry woman school
In due submission to her husband's rule.
Throughout the provinces of this vast realm,
Of which Ahasuerus holds the helm,
Be it made known, in legislative course,
With Medio-Persia's stern, irrevocable force,
That wives are chattels like our slaves and pelf,
With no inherent right to think for self.

Or wield in aught an independent will,
Much less pretend, with vaunted virtue's skill,
To save the imperiled, sinking ship of state
From tempests gendered by the wine-fiend's hate.
Both court and kingdom shall be thus redempt
From woman's malice and the world's contempt."

His vicious cause the wily sophist won :
As asked, Ahasuerus bade it done,
And through the provinces, to this intent,
His letters patent by express were sent.

No wonder, with such fact in Scripture given,
Though no where stated as approved of heaven,
The Tennyson of theologians famed—
So Bushnell is by Cuyler blandly named—
Should puff at nature's and at reason's lights,
To shroud in Egypt's darkness WOMAN'S RIGHTS,
And, with proverbial cleanness of new broom,
To sweep from kitchen and from drawing-room,
The hated ballots of the world's campaign
For universal suffrage—but in vain.

Bad logic suiting to a yet worse cause,
He builds his argument on unjust laws,
And holds, if all with right to vote are born,
Those States which of that right some men have shorn,
Because of inability to read,
Or thriftless lack of freehold title deed,
Defraud male citizens ; ne'er therefore should
Enfranchise woman : this for public good !
But, though with facts from Biblic annals armed,
And, in their use, with poet's license charmed,
How dare sage Bushnell such position take,
Unless, indeed, two wrongs one right will make ?
When next "The Moral Uses of Dark Things,"
In clerkly prose our modern Horace sings,
A special favor he will doubtless do
The shoddy prince, and dusky freedman too,
By showing, in the glare of Hartford lights,
That "poor white trash" and women have no rights.

His logic faulty, next keen ridicule,
The subtle controvertist's two-edged tool,
Gashing full oft the hand that wields it ill,
Aloft he brandishes with right good will,
To hack, or frighten, if he can not slay,
The ghosts that round the manly patriot play.
So demagogues rehearse stale anecdotes,
The polls burlesque, and prate of extra votes,
Exposing tricks their party pure disowns—
As how, in Essex (Jersey), Mary Jones,
With classic features and a smile *so* sweet,
Eclipsed a "Tammany Repeater's" feat,
By voting early; then, with change of dress,
And due arrangement of each shining tress,
Voting again, to show her estimate
Of the rare merit of her candidate;
And, questioned of her name, with bird-like trill,
Responding naively, "I am Mary—*Still!*"

Well, now, Sir Politician, what of that?
Do not the very same Mynheer and Pat?
Is strategy—employed to blind the eyes,
And baulk the queries of inspectors wise—
The weapon only of the party skunk,
With lager bloated, or with bourbon drunk?
Shall woman—victim of unequal laws—
Tried without jury, suffer without cause?
With Indians, coolies, idiots be ranked?
By gamblers, thieves, and drunkards ever flanked?

Nay, Friends of Temp'rance: while she grandly fights
The wine-fiend, pray, acknowledge WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

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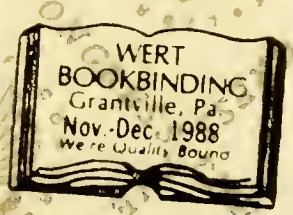
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